THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, Sir. The import of Natural Rubber during the current year is 69358 MT as on 28th February 2007. Total import of Natural Rubber during 2005-06 was 45285 MT.

(b) Natural Rubber prices in the international market have been ruling below the rubber prices in Indian market during October 2006-January 2007.

(c) India has decided to keep all the major trade forms of NR in the negative list of various free trade agreements. Since natural rubber is included in the list of sensitive items of import, its import is closely monitored by the Government. There is 20% customs duty on Natural Rubber and 70% on Centrifuged Rubber. Import of natural rubber is also subject to quality certification by the Rubber Board.

Free trade agreement

†1651. SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the countries with whom India has free trade agreements;

(b) whether Government have ever assessed their grains and losses; and

(c) if so, the country-wise details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) India has entered into Free Trade Agreements with the following countries/regions:-

(i) The India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement covering only goods was signed on 28th December, 1998 and its implementation began in March, 2000.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(ii) India and Singapore have signed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) on 29 June, 2005 which became effective from 1 August, 2005. the CECA includes, *inter-alia*, free trade agreements in goods, services and investment.

(iii) The Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) was signed by the SAARC member countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) during the 12th SAARC Summit in Islamabad on 6 January, 2004. The Agreement covers goods only and has come into force from 1 January, 2006. The tariff liberalization programme under SAFTA is under implementation from 1 July, 2006.

(iv) India also has bilateral trade treaties with Nepal and Bhutan, under which duty-free access has been provided to goods from these two countries, on non-reciprocal basis.

(b) and(c) The Government assesses the overall gains from such agreements based on economic as well as geo-political considerations. The Free Trade Agreements have by and large enhanced bilateral trade and investment flows with these countries.

Increase in price of imported brass scrap

1652. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a large number of brass parts industrial units in Jamnagar are facing closure due to steep increase in the prices of imported brass scrap;

(b) whether it is a fact that more than 50,000 people are earning their livelihood from those units;

(c) whether the Jamnagar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) and Jamnagar Brass Parts Industry Factory Owner's Association have made representation to that effect to Government, for helping the industry; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY